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ABSTRACT

The current "third-wave" educational reformers are committed to deeper and more far-reaching school improvement efforts that have been conceived almost totally in structuralist terms. The word "restructuring" often appears in such reforms to signal reformers' intent to institute "systemic" reform. The latter term connotes reformers' determination to engage in "system" reform, as opposed to piecemeal (first- and second-wave) change and embraces the concept of "wholes" or "structures" promoted by structuralism. Using Kentucky and Chicago school reform efforts as examples, this paper argues that reform cast as structuralism has marginalized humans (administrators) as primary action agents and/or change recipients and blinded reformers to the critical role of powerful persons who enable reforms to be politically successful. The structuralist concept of incommensurability is one culprit. Also, "structural change" or "restructuring" rests on assumptions that deny it an empirical base for evaluative purposes. Student achievement outcomes cannot be considered appropriate measures to establish a (currently nonexistent) theory of reform. Shorn of an empirical theory to test, it is impossible to learn from failures. (Includes 45 references.) (MLH)

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The Conceptual Limitations of Systemic Educational Reform

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Running head: The Conceptual Limitations of Systemic Educational Reform

Abstract

Third wave educational reforms have been conceived almost totally in structuralist terms. The word "re-structuring" often appears in such reforms to signal the reformers intent to institute "systemic" reform. This term connotes the near totality of the aims of the reformers to engage in "system" reform as opposed to piecemeal (first and second wave) change. The use of this idea is part and parcel of the idea of "wholes" or "structures" promoted by structuralism. This paper presents the view that reform envisioned as change within a structuralist metanarrative mutes individual administrative decision makers and blinds such efforts to the critical role powerful persons may play in enabling reforms to be politically successful. One of the culprits is the structuralist concept of incommensurability. Furthermore "structural change" or "re-structuring" as it is sometimes called, rests on assumptions which deny it an empirical base for evaluative purposes. Student achievement outcomes cannot be considered appropriate measures to establish a theory of reform which continues to be lacking. Shorn of an empirical theory to test, it is impossible to learn from reform failures.

The Conceptual Limitations of Systemic Educational Reform

The current "third wave" educational reformers are committed to deeper and more far reaching efforts to improve schools. The term which signals this intention is "systemic change" (Murphy, 1992, p.9). Previous school reforms lacked any concept of "system" (Sarason, 1990) which resulted in "overly simple cause-and-effect explanations and interventions that [were] based on tunnel vision" (p.15).

The themes which comprise "systemic change" are "institutionalized and governance structures, work roles and organizational milieu, core technology and connections between the school and its larger environment" (Murphy, 1992, p.9).

Similarly, Elmore (1990) has indicated that there are three models of restructuring schools that are centered around the themes of: (1) altering the core technology of schools, (2) reforming the occupational conditions of teaching, and (3) reforming the relationship between schools and their clients. Elmore indicates that these three approaches all assume that re-structuring involves empowerment, accountability, and engagement in academic learning (p. 21).

Newman (1991) indicates that the arenas of restructuring which represent major areas of departure from conventional educational practice are those relating to student experiences, the professional lives of teachers, school

governance, management, and leadership, and coordination of community resources. The results of restructuring are authentic student achievement, the attainment of equity of educational opportunity, empowerment, the creation of communities of learning, reflective dialogue, and accountability.

The silent conceptual hiatus in these pronouncements is that individual children, teachers, administrators or policy makers are not the locus of change, but all of them will be changed within a total re-structuring effort because they are impacted by even more holistic relationships and necessary transformations. These larger pieces make up the whole of the "system" of education, and it is this system of education that is the target of the third wave reformers. Sizer (1991) captures the emphasis when he says that "Significant school change requires attending to all the consequential parts of a school at once" (p. 32).

The metanarrative or grand theory (Cherryholmes,1988, p.11) which supports and is embedded in "systemic change" is that of structuralism (English, 1994, p. 123). Gibson (1984) indicates that structuralism is both a theory...and a method" (p. 12). It is comprised of six inter-related ideas. They are (1) the notion of wholeness and that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, (2) reality lies in relationships and not in free standing entities, (3) individuals are decentered as objects of study, (4) self-regulation by which the totality of the system is always

preserved, (5) preference for snap shot or one time analysis rather than over time, and (6) transformation in that wholes and the laws which regulate them are the origin and direction of any flow of change (Gibson, 1984, pp. 8-11). The intellectual home of structuralism is the study of linguistics, specifically the work of Ferdinand de Saussure (Holdcroft,1991) and later applications of his work by Jakobson and Chomsky (Pettit, 1975).

It is the function of this paper first to show that some tenets of structuralism denigrate the role of administrative decision making by individuals, and that this bias is derived from using a linguistic model. Furthermore it is an example of the structuralist concept of <u>incommensurability</u> which has been ignored in using structuralist assumptions in defining the current third wave educational reforms.

Secondly, by obliterating the individual in educational systems, educational reform as an application of structuralism has jeopardized the reform itself and spread a kind of seductive perfume over policy makers that one does not have to worry about individuals because actions will neither threaten nor advance "systemic change." The evidence, as we shall see, does not support this contention. Individuals, especially those in powerful, bureaucratic or legislative hierarchical positions, continue to exercise great influence over the success or failure of educational reforms. The flaws inherent in structuralism as an idea have given reformers a false sense of security, and inadequately

prepared them for circumstances which are not explained by their work to engage in "systemic change."

In addition, "re-structuring schools" is not what Moorman and Egermeier (1992) have called "a generative metaphor and new vision" (pp. 15-60). Rather it represents a familiar strategy in which all organizations engage to promote orthodoxies within a stipulated ideology by developing vague statements which "...can attract a broad coalition of supporters whose underlying disagreements would keep them from supporting a more clearly defined program of action" (Mitchell and Beach, 1991, p.1). While conceptual fuzziness may be a problem for some reformers, conceived as a political orthodoxy it is a requisite condition for success. In this sense structural reform lacks any grounds for moral justification except as it may exist within its own text-ideology. This means that third wave educational reform is largely amoral since only people can be moral agents and make moral decisions.

Conceptual Flaws Inherent in Structuralism

The generative focus of structuralism was linguistic analysis. Saussure insisted that written language could be divorced from speech and that <u>the text</u> took on a meaning of its own (Martinet, 1970, p.5). Linguistics then proceeded to engage in analysis of the text apart from any external referent to a specific historical context. This type of analysis has been called <u>synchronic,</u> and likened to a photographic snapshot (Gibson, 1984, p. 23). Structural

analysis is ahistorical. It is not dependent upon context to provide meaning or any specific events or personages. It devalues history as a valid informant to its analytical procedures.

Because Saussure argued that words had no meaning except as a relationship to other words, the divorce from speech was accepted. However, when this idea is adapted to organizational systems as larger "structures" one is then forced to accept the same logic by denying that individuals qua individuals matter, but only as they are part of a group which is transformed by altering culture, climate or organizational structure/roles.

Structuralism then negates the competent individual and downplays or ignores what Gibson (1984) has called "the reciprocity" between the individual and the whole (p. 18) or "the system." Individual actions are understood only as they occur within the system (the whole) with the assumption that the individual does not or will not act outside the relations/context of the whole. We intend to show that educational reform has been damaged by individuals who acted outside the relations of the whole, or who failed to act inside the relations of the whole when that action was clearly required to enhance/advance a reform.

The Problem of Incommensurability

Saussurian linguistics posits the idea of linguistic incommensurability. Since languages are arbitrary systems of signs, an idea in one language may not be possible to translate into another. This incapacity of inter-language transmission is the concept of incommensurability (Devitt and Sterelny,1987,pp. 173-84).

We proffer that the language of social systems based on linguistic premises is also incommensurable. For example, while it may be productive to consider words only within their relationships to other words within the larger linguistic system, it is neither productive nor realistic to transfer this idea to individual human beings functioning within their respective social systems. While one could argue that nearly all of human actions do occur within larger systems and are defined by relationships with them, exceptions do happen.

We offer as an example the famous Oskar Schindler of Schindler's List (Keneally, 1982) who acted outside his social system. We also think of the Nazi war criminals at Nuremberg who argued that they were only acting "within" their social systems and carrying out "orders." How could they be responsible for their actions?

By denying individuals free will to act inside or outside their social systems we remove from human beings the concept

of conscience and the thoroughly Western notion of the human being as a responsible moral agent. There are no choices then within structural systems. Humans are shaped by and only act within them, even if they are corrupt and evil.

We believe that by so viewing human action, we have removed from reference the "competent individual" upon whose shoulders individual decisions may originate. We thus have a view which is corruptive of the idea of moral action. We do not believe that individuals are powerless, nor do our legal systems accept this idea.

What we have here is an adaptation of a linguistic concept that appears reasonable in its context, but which is incorrectly applied to human social systems. Individual words may have no meaning. They may be powerless. Individual people are not powerless. Applied structuralism from linguistics to human social systems is incommensurable. However third wave reform structuralists routinely proffer and accept its commensurability.

The Issue of Reciprocity

The second problem with structuralism is that the individual is considered impotent to change the system. The idea that leadership may change the system because relationships are not simply system defined and limited is ignored or suppressed. Again from linguistics, words cannot exert a relationship on the larger structure. They have

meaning only within the structure. The structure works its influence on the word.

Structuralism applied to human social systems identifies individuals as similar to words in sentences. "Structuralism is profoundly subversive to notions of individual identity or autonomy as conventionally understood," notes Gibson (1984, p. 23). By not considering individuals as powerful persons in their own sphere, structuralism leads reformers to concentrate their reforms on groups: school site councils, teachers, parents, students, administrators. It is assumed that as the system requires such groups or modifies their behaviors or spheres of action/influence, individuals will simply conform as well. We believe this is a naive assumption.

Structuralism as Ideology and Institutional Orthodoxy: The Problem of the Lack of a Theory of Reform

When the characteristics of structuralism are expressed by third wave reformers they involve schools and school systems creating visions or missions for themselves, determining equality of access, analyzing their component parts in the authority structure, delineating tasks in the core technology, altering power relationships, dealing with environmental imperatives, professional orientation, marketing and politics (Moorman and Egermeier, 1992, pp.30-35; Schlechty, 1991). These ideas are involved in constructing an organization's ideology.

Dunham (1964) has indicated that three types of assertions are required for the delineation of an organization's ideology (we might liken this to the structural equivalent of syntax). The first involves, "a group of sentences describing the objective circumstances in which the organization acts and stating the moral values which the organization regards as ultimate" (p. 15). The second relates to the organization's purpose and structure. The third relates to how its purposes will be attained in the stated objective circumstances.

Dunham is clear about why such an ideology is necessary.

> Without a description of objective circumstances, nothing can be explained; without a demonstratable system of values, nothing can be justified. Without a statement of purposes, it cannot be known what the organization intends; without a program, it cannot be known how the purposes are to be attained"(p. 17).

The major purpose of an ideology is to promote unity within the organization. "They bind the members to the organization and to one another...." notes Dunham. The purpose of ideology is therefore internal not external.

The major problem with organizational ideology occurs when it contains errors." Once these errors embed themselves in doctrine, they are beyond the reach of easy correction.

They have become part of the source of unity. Their removal is not a mere scientific adjustment, but a dislocation of the corporate body" (Dunham, 1964, p. 18).

We view third wave reform as being involved with delineating a new type of reform ideology, but an ideology just the same. It's primary concern is internal, just as structuralism's view is internal, on the system and its parts, or the words of Piaget (1970) "the structure is reserved or enriched by the interplay of its transformation laws, which never yield results external to the system nor employ elements that are external to it" (p. 5).

The lack of externality to structuralism means that it cannot be empirically validated or tested. Reform components are selected on non-empirical grounds and considered "good things" by themselves politically such as empowerment, de-centralization, changes in core technology, work roles and organizational milieu. As Habermas (1990) has commented, "...the data used to test an empirical theory cannot be described independently of the language of the same theory" (p. 118). On the meta-theoretical level Habermas notes that two empirical theories emanating from the same paradigm cannot be evaluated empirically. The only test is that of coherence (p.118) (see also Evers and Lakomski, 1991). We believe that the "coherence test" in the political arena is that of casting change in ideological terms as new words to describe old orthodoxies. A true "reform" of education or a

viable heresy is not possible when reforms are simply cast as new orthodoxies in political terms.

When reform components are considered "good ideas" without empirical verification referenced to externality, they tend to be considered successful when implemented, rather than as a means to some other specified end. We believe that educational reform today lacks: (1) any empirical theory of reform by which various ideas defined as "reform," can be tested, and (2) reform pieces by being divorced from externalities, suffer from being self-justifying tautologies. Thus, as in the case of the so-called "effective schools" research the components which comprise it display high intercorrelations to the concept and to each other, but are not predictive of real reform or improvement on student achievement (Grady, Wayson and Zirkel, 1989). Reform "pieces" are like linguistic synonyms and "correspond" to the whole and to each other, but are not any more powerful than the whole because they are simply subsets of the whole.

Tautologies are rampant within closed systems and structuralism divorced from external reference fosters the conditions for their use. They can become examples of Russell's V.C.P. (vicious circle principle) (see Haack, 1978, p. 141). Reform "waves" are thus more correctly considered as spinoff ideologies rather than a "new" concept

of change grounded in any empirical theory which is testable.

The Dubious Role of Student Achievement Indicators to Test Educational Reforms or Qualify Current Reform Efforts as Theoretical

The presence of student outcomes as achievement indicators do not qualify various reforms to be considered testable and thus provide a basis for externality outside of its own linguistic system.

The reasons are as follows:

(1) Outcomes are not a complete nor coherent theory in absence of predicted means/ends relationships to be tested

The simple presence of student outcomes is not evidence of a coherent theory to be tested. Such a theory would posit the presence of specific means/ends relationships (see Lemahieu and Foss, 1994, p.18). Such conditions are a far cry from being developed or testable at the present time. As Goodlad(1975) noted in the seventies, "There is not a science of education...." (p.110). The absence of such relationships do not permit education to be considered a science at all.

(2) Outcomes are Self-Contained (tautological) and Not Independent Variables

Structuralism is shorn of externalities. By embracing reform components as "good things" in themselves, student outcomes are logically irrelevant by which to test the efficacy of the components. Furthermore, in the context of testing, the largest predictor of student success is not related to any school controlled variables. The largest predictors are related to socio-economic status (see Fowler and Walberg, 1991). This means that student achievement indicators are not dependent variables of educational reform, but independent variables which exist in spite of reform.

From a structuralist perspective educational reform is a matter of adherence to the "common good," or "common weal" instead of being specific means to the ends of improving pupil performance. Educational reform cast as political ideologies are part of the quest for power and influence within the electorate. Educational reforms are more accurately cast as mythmaking within political orthodoxies in search of mass appeal to the voters. In the absence of any real reform theory to be tested, the implementation of reform components represents political programs and not testable predictions. The fact that Chapter 1 continues to

be supported has not been due to its educational performance, but due to its political viability. In this set of circumstances truth is determined by power not by empirical results (see Dunham, 1964, p. 306) and educational reforms are not likely to change much. In the words of Irving Kristol (1994) commenting upon the recent passage of the Goals 2000 Education Act:

> In the end the educational establishment, will get more money to continue doing what it is doing; the politicians will get a few favorite ideas of their own--invariably foolish--incorporated into the educational system; and there will be no real improvement in the education of American youngsters" (p. A14).

Our conclusion of the continued utilization of structuralism as the basis for considering educational reform is that since no theory is being tested, it is impossible to learn from mistakes. One could argue that it is impossible to make mistakes in any framework of empirical analysis at all. The determinism of educational reform is underscored by the view that "cyclical waves of improvement efforts ..have washed over education approximately every decade for the past 110 years....restructuring is linked in a longer chain of history and grounded in ideological perspectives that themselves enjoy a deep heritage " (Murphy, 1993, pp. 6-7).

The Amorality of Educational Reform as Structuralism

Educational organizations or "structures" within them are neither moral nor immoral. Only people are moral or immoral. Organizations are more aptly amoral, i.e., indifferent to morality. Educational reform cast as structuralism has marginalized humans as the primary action agents and/or recipients of change. "Re-structuring" does not change this circumstance. It continues to ignore externalities and contextual circumstances either immediate or historical.

We will now examine two massive educational reforms in the United States, Kentucky and Chicago to see how the metanarrative of structuralism and its educational manifestation of "systemic reform" fails to account for the actions of important individuals.

Examples of Third Wave Educational Reform that Ignored the Power of Significant Individuals

Kentucky

The Kentucky Education Reform Act (known as KERA) was the result of a state supreme court decision which declared the entire educational system unconstitutional (Rose v. Council for Better Education, 1989). The Court said, "...We view this decision as an opportunity for the General

Assembly to launch the Commonwealth into a new era of educational opportunity which will ensure a strong economic, cultural and political future (Miller, Noland and Schaaf, 1991, p.46).

The decision forced the Kentucky General Assembly to structurally rebuild the educational system. "This decision applies to the entire sweep of the system--all its parts and parcels. This decision applies to all the statutes creating, implementing and financing the system and to all regulation, etc. pertaining thereto" (Rose at 215). It was thus cast from the beginning as structural, systemic and designed to alter institutionalized and governance apparatus, work roles, organizational design and the connection between the school and the larger community.

KERA is first and foremost a political reform. "Politics in Kentucky is inseparable from its two hundred years of history, its geography, its religion, its literature and its sport" (Miller, 1994, p.3). This is a state where there has been a long history of the dominance of county (the local unit) political influence. KERA is best understood as both anchored in county political power and an attempt to re-structure (but not eliminate) that power from a larger system perspective, that of the state.

Full implementation of the act was to take six years meaning KERA would be fully implemented by July 1, 1996.

Legislative leaders believed that if they could prevent dramatic backlashes when the General Assembly met in 1992, 1994, and 1996, they would have achieved their objective of a restructured state system of education where all children in the Commonwealth were learning at high academic levels. KERA was defined by a small group of consultants serving the legislature. Its programs were never subject to extensive debate or testimony by affected or interested groups appearing before the legislature or any of its sub-committees. There was almost no "grassroots" involvement of the major provisions of KERA. From the beginning the components were created by three committees working independently on the problem of "reform." No central theory of reform was ever outlined by the legislature or its consultants. Reform was simply the compilation of the various parts of facets which came to be called KERA (Steffy, 1993).

Structural Components of KERA

Finance

There are 176 school districts in the State of Kentucky ranging in size from over 90,000 students to less than 300. Of those, 123 are county systems and 53 are independent districts. An independent school district is usually one serving a small town within a larger county. The average increase in local school budgets exceeded 30% from 1989 to 1992. By 1994 the increase was approximately 40%. No one can

argue in Kentucky that significant amounts of money have not been put into the effort. What can be argued is whether these new funds have reached the classroom level in the guise of new instructional supplies and equipment. A large percentage of the increased funding for education has been used to provide teachers with salary increases (approximate statewide average is 30%), pay for increased costs of fringe benefits, contribute to teacher retirement funds, and pay for student transportation (Office of Education Accountability Annual Report, 1992).

Since the initial class action suit which led to the supreme court decision was a financial equity suite, Kentucky legislators take great pride in being able to document that the financial disparity between the amount of money available per student in property rich districts and property poor districts is being reduced. Whether the students in property poor districts are now achieving at the same high levels as students in property "rich" school districts has yet to be determined. When the state supreme court declared the system unconstitutional it indicated that the problems with Kentucky schools were more than money problems, so the solution had to be more than providing property poor districts with more money.

Governance

Even though many of the problems facing Kentucky schools were believed to be related to the politics of local school governance, the legislature did not choose to change the size or configuration of any local school district. Some speculate that this decision was made because of the relationship between local government politics and local school politics. Prior to the 1960's most Kentucky counties were run on a two party system of those in power and those aspiring to power. The group currently out-of-power would accuse the group in-power of nepotism, cronyism and corruption (Miller, 1994). It was not unusual for the massive personnel changes to take place at all levels within education and government when an election caused one group to be put out and another came in.

To deal with the governance issues, the legislature did enact a variety of statutes to limit the amount of nepotism in schools and to shift the instructional decision-making power from the district level to the school level. School-level policy setting power was given to a school council composed of three teachers, two parents and the school principal. Councils have statutory power to make decisions in areas such as the selection of a new principal, use of school time and facilities, and the selection of

instructional strategies and materials. Along with this new policy setting authority, the local school became the unit of accountability. The accountability formula requires that each school will be provided a baseline score and that the school must show improvement in both cognitive and non-cognitive areas so that over time, the schools will be able to document that all students are learning at high levels.

Curriculum

The components of KERA which fell into the area of curriculum include such things as new student performance standards, a new state testing system, provision for half-day preschool program for children qualifying for free lunch, the creation of positions designed to assist families and link the social services of the community with the educational services. Some of these programs have been quite popular like the preschool program and a program which supplies extra money for summer school and before-school and after-school programs. Others have been the subject of heated debate and controversy such as the technology program, the assessment program and the student "outcomes" framework. KERA represents the most complete and advanced thinking regarding a structuralist approach to "third wave" educational reform. As the third wave reformers have defined "systemic" it is the most inclusive compilation of reforms yet implemented in the United States. Yet when what is not working is examined closely, we can identify individuals as

some of the reasons. As individuals making decisions outside of the "system," they have exercised a largely negative and blocking force in educational reform in Kentucky.

People Problems Outside Kentucky Re-Structuring

The Impasse with Technology

One of the key programmatic initiatives embodied in KERA was the creation of an instructional and administrative technology network which would link all the schools in the Commonwealth with the state department of education and enable information to flow across an "information highway." Students would have access to the knowledge base of the world via their computers and administrators would freely exchange information with the state, other administrators and other agencies. Money was provided for the development of the program and the 1990 legislation required that the system would be operational by August of 1991. In June, 1994, the envisioned system is still not operational and administration of the technology program has been removed from the Department of Education because of the alleged administrative problems and the fact that the technology "backbone" contained in the legislation has not materialized. The reason for the impasse was one very powerful legislator, a former IBM executive, who insisted on being personally involved in all aspects of the program. When he came to be at odds with the administrator in charge

of technology, the continuing friction ultimately resolved in the dismissal of the administrator on charges he was not a college graduate. After the legislator came under pressure he "took himself" out of the decision making loop on technology. Because of this one individual, program implementation was critically delayed, cost projections escalated, and the target date for full implementation of the technology aspect of KERA is unknown.

The Individual Struggle for Control

KERA ushered in a new administrative head for the state educational bureaucracy, the Commissioner of Education. The old State Superintendent of Public Instruction embedded in the Commonwealth's Constitution could only be changed by a vote of the people. Such a change had been defeated on more than one occasion. So KERA did not eliminate the State Superintendency, it simply downgraded the salary substantially and removed most of the duties of the position. These were re-focused in the new administrative role.

The new Commissioner of Education took action to intervene in one of the state's most troubled school districts. He forced the local board to select his choice as superintendent. That intervention cost him the support of the House majority leader whose home county was the site of the intervention (May, 1994a). The House majority leader has

subsequently become a vocal critic of the Commissioner, saying publicly things like, " [He] probably wakes up every morning scared to death that somebody's going to figure out he's making more money than he's ever made in his life in a better job than he ever hoped to get, and he can't do the job" (May, 1994a). The House majority leader recently introduced legislation to superimpose the authority of the legislature in extending the Commissioner's contract through 1997. This act would have subjected the State Board of Education's power to determine the Commissioner's contract to legislative veto. The bill passed in the House 60-35 but failed in the Senate.

Behind the scenes in Kentucky individual legislators continue to exert enormous power over the reform. The Commissioner has to determine the individual feelings of powerful legislators before certain administrative moves are contemplated (May, 1994a). Two influential legislators held up a study of the State's controversial authentic assessment system until a survey could be conducted of citizens, legislators and educators regarding their concerns about the tests (May, 1994b,p. B3).

The history of KERA to date is one of powerful persons who continue to have an influence over reform, positive and negative. Clearly the roles of these individuals anchored to their lone realities/externalities is outside of the structuralist metanarrative.

Chicago Reform as Structuralist Metanarrative

The celebrated reform in Chicago is also an example of the dominance of structuralism and orthodoxy in concepts of educational reform. The Chicago School Reform Act, passed in 1988, is centered on three internal alterations of the system's "structure." They were the mandates to relate the allocation of resources to student outcomes, the necessity to re-distribute the resources to the school level, and to involve parents and community in determining how the resources should be spent (Hess, 1991, p. 106). While the election of persons to local site councils captured the attention of the media, the overall reform was judged to be in danger of failing by the only external evaluation conducted of the comprehensive "re-structuring" of the system (Quinn, Stewart and Nowakoski, 1993). That external evaluation conducted by NCREL noted that, " Dismantling systemwide capacity, while it may appear to resolve some immediate and consequential problems, does not of itself create the foundation for effective education" (p. 11). The NCREL evaluation called for a change from an emphasis on "governance and structure," to one which would impact classrooms (p.11). To date no such emphasis has been found to exist within the system.

The emphasis on internal synchrony regnant in structuralist ideology enabled the administrators in the school system to engage in extended and elaborate forms of paper shuffling to "comply" with the reform. The Chicago Board's Reform Plan, required in law was analyzed:

> The Board's Reform Plan consists of 26 goals broken into 51 objectives. These are followed by a listing of approximately 233 separate reform 'action steps'... Of the approximate 233 so-called action steps to be initiated in 1989-90, possibly only 15 or 6% could be called significant reform which may reinforce the movement toward school based management (English, 1990, p.9).

The Chicago Reform Plan has been unable to substantially improve pupil achievement as stipulated in the original legislative act and in some areas it is lower today than four years ago. The Chicago Reform Plan left out the significant individual players who really determine if any reform will ever really occur in the school system. They are the mayor, the superintendent of schools, and the leaders of the Chicago Teacher's Federation. The real reform scenario rests on determining, "who are the people who would lead this effort [reform] and how radical are they? Reform occurs not by prospective planning but by picking a leader who

knows what to do and does it. Everything else follows "(English, 1992, p. 18).

If one had to select the one person who could make a difference in the Chicago Public Schools it would be the superintendent. It is because of superintendent temerity that the initiative was not seized in Chicago to work within the re-structuring contained in the reform act. The act assumed that the superintendent would initiate the necessary changes, or that the superintendent could be bypassed since the initiative would have been passed to the local school councils. That idea is naive. It has worked to the detriment of systemic reform in Chicago.

A report compiled by McKersie (1992) which compared two analyses of the Chicago Public Schools by NCREL and Booz-Allen & Hamilton and underwritten by the MacArthur Foundation recommended that, "The Central Administration must act aggressively to realize operational improvements and cost savings under its control, totalling about $100 million (only 20% of the problem)" (p. I-4) Both reports indicate that the problems facing Chicago were those involving "structural issues" such as effective de-centralization with a statement that "....Chicago is attempting to operate a largely decentralized school system with a centralized management philosophy and approach" (p. II-2).

The operations of the school system turn on the role of the superintendency. The Reform Act gave the Superintendent broad powers within the school system so that the role would have "control...of all departments and the employees..of the public schools. The General Superintendent was provided with the authority to prescribe and control courses of study, textbooks, educational apparatus and equipment, discipline in and conduct of the schools and the power to negotiate labor contracts (Chicago School Reform Act, Section 34-6, pp. 55-56).

The McKersie Report (1992) also noted that, " A not so subtle theme in both reports is that Chicago will need stronger and bolder leadership regarding education if student learning is to improve" (p. II-3). McKersie noted that this involved "bolder direction" from two persons (the mayor and the superintendent) and two agencies, the board and the School Finance Authority.

Yet the Superintendent in Chicago was perceived by reform groups as a "blocker." As the Superintendent came up for his second public board review various community groups commented. Said the head of the Parents United for Responsible Education, "The complaints are almost unanimous: All the energies of the local school councils are going to fight the central office rather than developing the schools

the way they want" (Weele, 1992a, p. 4). When a new superintendent was finally hired from New York City, the executive director of one of the established Chicago school reform groups said publicly, "There have been major changes in Chicago but the problem has been that they were achieved to a great extent in spite of opposition from the superintendent. It was like pulling a boulder uphill" (Rossi, 1993, p.A1).

The key support for the superintendent was the Mayor of Chicago who also appoints the board of education (Weele, 1992b. The Chicago reform's success is still very much in doubt. Without the clear support of two powerful individuals it is not likely "re-structuring" will ever work. The paradox is that individuals in power in the current hierarchy have the authority to block re-structuring. The theoretical base for re-structuring is blind when it comes to such power being wielded to undermine or squelch the changes it advocates, and without a theory to test which is referenced in the real world and not simply to itself, educational reform consists of ever widening circles of political orthodoxies to implement. In such circumstances the failures are recorded as those related to the lack of breadth of the orthodoxy, rather than any empirical results attained.

Conclusions

Using a structuralist metanarrative, when one says reform doesn't work, the culprit may not be the reform per se, but the failure on the part of the reformers to think bigger, i.e., systemically. The logic of structuralism shorn of externalities admits to failure only as a matter of lacking internal synchrony or fidelity (having enough of the proper ingredients or components) to impact the change envisioned. Individuals are eliminated as necessary for the change to succeed or fail because people are viewed as shaped by the structures in which they live and work. There can be no morality in educational organizations unless people are recognized as decision makers who may choose to endorse or reject changes being proposed. When humans are elevated to moral agents who may choose to accept or reject "re-structuring" we may have finally begun to alter the metanarrative that is bound to fail in reforming schools. The real tragedy is not failing itself, but the failure to learn from failure. The structuralist position regarding educational "third wave" reform is inherently flawed.

The problem is that the third wave reformers have created an enormous set of expectations which cannot be realized. The outlook is bleak for as Toch (1991) warns, "If substantial progress is not made, if the nation's lofty

expectations are ultimately frustrated, public education stands to suffer a loss of political and financial support far greater than it did in the late 1970's" (p. 275). The concept of "systemic reform" is likely to be one more compromised political orthodoxy. The "fourth wave" reform cannot be allowed to enlarge the circle or to believe that restructuring is "the prospect..for a continuous process of reconstruction" (Sirotnik, 1989, p.104). Instead we must begin by formulating a theory of reform by which reform itself can be grounded and tested.

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